

New hires for Costa Mesa Police Department brings total officers to 125

Costa Mesa Police Department recruitment efforts are paying off as the department added six new officers, one lateral hire and five OC Sheriff Academy graduates, that brings the staffing numbers up to 125 sworn officers.

“I want to thank those from the city and police department recruiting staff who have worked so diligently to add new officers to our department as we rebuild and prepare for the future,” Chief Rob Sharpnack said. “These new hires will be so critical as we tackle important city priorities and expand our specialty assignments.”

Joining the department last week was Officer Orlando Lopez, formally of the Fullerton Police Department, where he has been employed since October of 2013. Lopez is the fifth Fullerton officer to recently come over to Costa Mesa.



In Fullerton, he was a Senior Officer and has worked in Crime Scene Investigation and recently received a letter of commendation for his work on a vehicle burglary case.

Lopez decided to pursue a career in law enforcement and in

2007 he applied for and got the job as Correctional Deputy Trainee for the Riverside County Sheriff's Department where he worked for three years.

Then in February 2011, he graduated from the 183rd Riverside County Sheriff's Basic Academy and he worked in correctional facilities before joining the Fullerton Police Department.

In addition to officer Lopez, the five new academy graduates are Jeremiah Stanley, Jacob Schulze, Arturo Montoya, Michael Luu and Richard Lippincott. The five graduates were honored and recognized at the Class No. 228 academy graduation on Tuesday Nov. 7. Lippincott was named the sergeant of that graduating class.

Police team with County Probation Officers to snare six in compliance check

The Costa Mesa Police Department collaborated with the Orange County Probation Department on Thursday Aug. 24, to conduct compliance checks on offenders subject to Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS), per the State Prison Realignment Assembly Bill 109.

These checks were designed to locate and audit the activity of local criminal offenders residing within the City of Costa Mesa, who are under the supervision of OC Probation.

Officers completed 11 residential home checks of offenders and contacted 35 individuals, seven of whom were classified as PRCS/Probation offenders and two of whom were on formal

probation with gang terms.

The compliance checks resulted in four offenders being arrested for violations of the conditions of their probation and/or new criminal law violations, and two other individuals being cited for possession of drug paraphernalia.

Those arrested, with names withheld (in compliance with PC 11075-11081), are:

Female, 59 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 2000 block of Newport Boulevard

Supervision status: PRCS

Charges: possession of methamphetamine for sale, possession of drugs for sale, and possession of drug paraphernalia

Female, 37 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 800 block of Towne Street

Supervision status: PRCS probation

Charges: possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia

Male, 60 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1900 block of Meyer Place

Supervision status: probation supervision

Charges: resisting arrest, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of drug paraphernalia

Male, 26 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1900 block of Meyer Place

Supervision status: none

Charges: possession of drug paraphernalia

Male, 50 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1900 block of Meyer Place

Supervision status: probation supervision

Charges: resisting arrest, possession of methamphetamine, and possession of drug paraphernalia

Female, 53 years old, Costa Mesa

Location of arrest: 1900 block of Meyer Place

Supervision status: none Charges: possession of drug paraphernalia

CMPD Chaplain Leads volunteers in cleanup efforts at Westside senior mobile home park

Last week, Costa Mesa Police Chaplain Mike Decker led 49 young volunteers visiting from North Dakota in a park-wide cleanup project at the Greenleaf Mobile Home park located on the Westside of Costa Mesa.

The volunteers affiliated with The Gathering, a once every three years event showing kids how big of a change they can make in local communities, picked Costa Mesa to make a difference in.

“These Dakota kids and their sponsors, traveled 1,600 miles to share God’s love with our community,” said Decker, who also serves as pastor of Palm Harvest Church. “From all of us in Costa Mesa, we say thank you.”

The Gathering event serves as the national youth gathering for the North American Baptist Conference.

The Visitors arrived on Sunday and were quickly hard at work

throughout the park.

On Monday, July 10, the team set out to clean up multiple homes that needed some TLC and shore up the landscaping throughout the park.

A fence or two was even constructed. Planned for the week were visits with senior citizens in the park and a few trips to the beach.

Lynn Singer, one of the organizers of the trip explained that some of the kids making a difference had never been outside the small North Dakota town.

She also explained that it was important for the volunteers to remember that you don't have to go to Africa to make a difference.

Police seek robber of local McDonald's restaurant

Costa Mesa police are seeking a man who robbed a McDonald's restaurant in the 3000 block of Bristol Street.

On Tuesday July 25, a lone male had walked inside the restaurant and approached the female cashier.

The man presented a note demanding cash, while simultaneously brandishing a visible handgun partially tucked into his waistband.

Fearful of being harmed, the cashier complied with the demand note and handed the man cash from her register. The suspect fled on foot, and a witness phoned CMPD Dispatch.

The Huntington Beach Police Department helicopter immediately assisted Costa Mesa police officers who had responded to the business location.

Police were unable to locate the outstanding suspect or a vehicle used in the commission of the robbery.

Costa Mesa police coordinated with detectives and officers from neighboring jurisdictions, investigating the possible connection of similar robberies recently committed in Orange County.

The suspect is described as a Hispanic male, 20's, five feet, 11 inches tall, medium build wearing dark grey shorts and a black long-sleeve sweater. No vehicle is described.

Anybody with additional information regarding the robbery incident should contact the Costa Mesa Police Detective Bureau at 714-754-5637.

Costa Mesa police officers conduct compliance checks

The Costa Mesa Police Department collaborated with the [Orange County Probation Department](#) last week to conduct compliance checks on offenders subject to Post-Release Community Supervision (PRCS), per the State Prison Realignment Assembly Bill 109.

These checks were designed to locate and audit the activity of local criminal offenders residing within the City of Costa Mesa who are under the supervision of OC Probation.

Officers completed 27 residential home checks of offenders and

contacted 43 individuals, 23 of which were and classified as PRCS/Probation offenders and five of which were on formal probation with gang terms.

The compliance checks resulted in eight offenders being arrested for violations of the conditions of their probation and/or new criminal law violations, and two other individuals being cited for having an open container in public.

Man Arrested For Robbery After Pepper Spraying Victim Before Fleeing With Stolen Goods

Costa Mesa Police Department officers arrested Matthew Chima Udechukwu Tuesday after he met a stranger under the guise of purchasing goods but instead pepper sprayed the victim in the face before fleeing with stolen property.

At about 12:15 p.m. Tuesday, officers responded to a report of a robbery that had just taken place. The 18-year-old male victim was selling a pair of designer shoes that he had advertised on a resale app, and Udechukwu had met with the victim to purchase the shoes. After inspecting the shoes, it is suspected that Udechukwu pepper sprayed the victim in the face, incapacitating him, and fled on foot with the stolen shoes.

Costa Mesa officers quickly connected the suspect to a similar, previous incident that occurred on May 12, 2017. At about 12:48 p.m., officers had responded to the parking lot on

the 1700 block of Adams Avenue, to take a report from a 24-year-old male victim, who was selling a backpack.

The suspect in that incident had pepper sprayed the victim in the face before fleeing the scene with the victim's backpack. During the investigation into that first incident, officers identified Udechukwu and obtained a search warrant for the suspect's home, which officers served after the second incident.

At approximately 1 p.m. on Tuesday, officers went to Udechukwu's residence at the 2700 block of Mesa Verde Drive East and established a perimeter and observation of his apartment. Detectives subsequently arrived with the search warrant and after knocking on the door with no response and knowing the suspect was home, entry was forced into the apartment and Udechukwu was taken into custody for two counts of robbery.

All stolen property was recovered during the search.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with additional information or who believes they have been a victim is encouraged to contact Detective Chamness at (714) 754-5197.

Man accused of molestation and peeping of Eastside Costa Mesa residents pleads guilty

Costa Mesa resident Jeffrey Robert Smith pleaded guilty on Friday May 12, to multiple criminal charges that included burglary, peeping, molestation and indecent exposure.

Costa Mesa police officers arrested Smith in July of 2015 after being alerted to a naked male found by residents on their porch of their apartment complex. Costa Mesa Police Detectives had been investigating Smith, since May of 2015, for several cases involving sexual battery, burglary, indecent exposure, peeping, prowling and trespassing. Those earlier cases all occurred during early morning hours on the Eastside of Costa Mesa.

In late April of 2015, Smith had been arrested for failing to register as a sex offender with Costa Mesa, and he was sentenced to 60 days in jail. Approximately one month later, in May, Smith was arrested in Costa Mesa for battery and trespassing charges. In early July, Smith was arrested for failing to register as a sex offender with Costa Mesa, however, upon formal review of the case by court staff, he was subsequently released from custody.

CMPD joins OC Sheriff and Costa Mesa and County fire for training exercise at South Coast Plaza

The Costa Mesa Police Department, Costa Mesa Fire & Rescue, Orange County Sheriff's Department, Orange County Fire Authority and the Orange County Crime Lab conducted a routine training exercise on May 9, 2017, at South Coast Plaza.

The training exercise is part of a strategic multi-agency plan to stay updated on best practices and mitigate future large-scale incidents with required inter-operational cooperation.

South Coast Plaza officials offered their location, which was chosen by law enforcement for its size and accommodation to carry out a major proactive effort.

The training exercise took place in the evening with various facets of three emergency scenarios put together to improve technique and coordination between all agencies involved. No further information will be provided in regards to the training exercise in order to protect law enforcement and emergency services tactics and operational strategy.

“Police work and emergency response is ever evolving, and it’s important that we keep up with the times and improve our techniques,” said CMPD Chief Rob N. Sharpnack. “I would like to thank everyone involved for all their attention to such an important training and South Coast Plaza for graciously allowing us to use their location.”

Costa Mesa and Santa Ana police seek two men who reportedly have scammed two elderly victims

The Costa Mesa Police Department (CMPD) and the Santa Ana Police Department (SAPD) are seeking the public’s help in identifying two men suspected of scamming two elderly victims on two separate occasions, in the Cities of Costa Mesa and Santa Ana.

On April 11, 2017, at approximately 1:20 p.m., two suspects approached an 84-year-old Santa Ana resident on the street.

The victim was convinced to go to a bank on Main Street and make a withdrawal from his own bank account. The two men are suspected of then taking the victim's money and fleeing the scene.

On April 28, 2017, at approximately 10:30 a.m., the same suspects from the previous Santa Ana incident approached a 68-year-old Costa Mesa resident as he is walking home and started a conversation with the victim. The two men are suspected of convincing the victim into a car and driving him to his bank on Harbor Boulevard. They are further suspected of convincing the victim to withdraw money from his bank account and took the money from him. The two suspects then dropped off the victim in the same neighborhood before fleeing the scene.

These two suspects are known to loiter around banks and bus stops near banks.

The investigation is ongoing. Anyone with additional information regarding this is encouraged to contact CMPD's Det. George Maridakis at (714) 754-5051 for incidents in Costa Mesa, and SAPD Robbery Unit Det. Cpl. A. Silva at (714) 245-8545 for incidents in Santa Ana.

Descriptions:

Suspect 1: Male, Hispanic, 50-60 years old, 5'06"-5'07" tall, 150-160 lbs., brown eyes, gray hair, missing teeth (in photos).

Suspect 2: Male, Hispanic, 50-60 years old, 6'00"-6'02" tall, 160-170 lbs., gray hair, brown eyes, and broken teeth (no photo available).

Vehicle: late model Gold American sedan, possible Ford Taurus.



[Costa Mesa Police Department unveils Coyote Management Plan with tracking tool](#)

The Costa Mesa Police Department held a Town Hall meeting Tuesday April 25 to launch the first round of a new Coyote Management Plan to educate the public about ways to prevent and report coyote encounters.

“The key to mitigating coyote encounters is much like reducing crime,” said Capt. Mark Manley, who oversaw the plan’s creation. “It takes a partnership that starts with the community and links up with a comprehensive Coyote Management Plan.”

Costa Mesa Police Lt. Victor Bakkila, California Department of Fish & Wildlife Lt. Kent Smirl, and University of California's Dr. Niamh Quinn answered questions and addressed concerns. The plan is modeled after other similar plans within Orange County and has three main components including education and prevention, coyote hazing, and the reporting of coyote encounters.

The City has launched a [Coyote Information Page](#) where residents can get information about the [Coyote Management Plan](#) and report sightings and encounters [here on the Coyote Cacher](#).

New Coyote Management Plan to be discussed at Town Hall this Tuesday April 25

The Costa Mesa Police Department will be holding a town hall meeting on Tuesday, April 25 from 6 to 8 p.m. in City Council Chambers to unveil the City's new Coyote Management Plan.

Speakers will include members of the Police Department, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and a coyote researcher from the University of California.

City and Police Department staff have also produced a new video about coyotes that will be shown that evening.

The management plan includes a new mobile website for the self-reporting of coyote activity, a new Police Department coyote hotline and a community training program.

The experts will also provide a detailed explanation of coyote

behavior and strategies the community can employ to mitigate the frequency of coyotes within City neighborhoods.

Costa Mesa Police Department recognizes 19 for their performance and service to community

The Costa Mesa Police Department honored its top performers in 2016 at the annual Employee Recognition Breakfast on Thursday April 6 at The Crossings church.

With Sgt. Clint Dieball officiating as Master of Ceremony, the department paid tribute to 19 officers, including those who received Employee of the Year in their category, six who received Life Savings Award and seven who earned the Case of the Year Award.

In addition, the department honored South Coast Metro Business Alliance as this year's Community Partner.

"The men and women of the Costa Mesa Police Department make every effort to perform their duties in a competent, courteous and professional manner," Chief Rob Sharpnack said as he addressed the crowd gathered for breakfast.

The breakfast was attended by Mayor Katrina Foley, City Manager Tom Hatch, Assistant City Managers Tammy Letourneau and Rick Francis and by fellow officers and family members.

"Frequently, many of our department members exceed the expectations of the public in the performance of their duties," Sharpnack said. "Today, the Costa Mesa Police Department recognizes identified personnel, as voted on by their peers, for their exemplary performance and service to our community."

The awardees included William "Bill" Knowles for Volunteer of the Year, Citlaly Gomez for Explorer of the Year, Park Ranger Lorna Lyttle for Civilian of the Year, Records Supervisor Lidian Estecoc for Civilian Supervisor of the Year, Sgt. Jerry Souza for Sworn Supervisor of the Year and Det. Jose Morales for Officer of the Year.

Officers John Elliott, Jeremy Hermes, Gloriosio Manigbas, Tyrus Ranck, Erick Ransdell and Jared Shurley were bestowed with Life Saving Awards for their efforts in resuscitating victims.

The Case of the Year went to the core team who worked on the Sudweeks Cold Case Homicide Investigation. Those members of the department who were honored included Lt. Paul Beckman, Sgt. Stephanie Selinske, Detectives Jose Morales and Jason Chamness, CSI Investigator Kimberlee Guluzian, Crime Scene Specialist Sara Nguyen and Police Aide Nicole Diaz.

"Your collective efforts led to the identification of the suspect after a 20-year period," Chief Sharpnack said. "The culmination of this investigation has also provided much-needed closure for the Sudweeks family as they have had to carry the weight of this cold case for 20 years."